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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 001483

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PNAT](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: MALIKI DEMANDS HALT TO IRANIAN AND SYRIAN  
INTERFERENCE

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Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY: During his weekly security meeting on May 7 with the Ambassador and MNF-I Commanding General Petraeus, Prime Minister Maliki cited increasing evidence of Iran's direct interference in Iraqi affairs and the backlash it has engendered among Iraqis at all levels of society. He said he was prepared to personally deliver this message to Tehran, but only after military operations in Basrah and Sadr City are completed. The Ambassador replied that Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei had to make a choice whether to begin normal international relations or continue with destructive interference by his Qods Force surrogates. On Sadr City, Maliki expressed optimism about an emerging "awakening movement" which would rapidly grow when the government broke the grip of the Jaysh al-Mahdi Special Groups (JAM-SG) on the local populace. General Petraeus urged Maliki to keep up the military pressure there coupled with a "large dose" of humanitarian aid. Concerning another troubling neighbor, the Prime Minister strongly lashed out at Syria, accusing them of complicity in the recent murder of 13 Iraqi policemen near al-Qaim. He noted this was just one example of their disturbing behavior. Turning to politics, Maliki claimed Tawafaq had agreed to return to the government, but noted continued squabbling on proposed ministerial candidates. Regarding Ahmed Chalabi, the Prime Minister confirmed Chalabi was finished at the Services Committee and cited a litany of complaints against him. The meeting concluded with a promise by Maliki to discuss with MinDef Abdel Qadr the implications of his delaying approval of Foreign Military Sales agreements, which will result in shortages of combat equipment available for issue as military units emerge from training this summer. END SUMMARY.

Maliki: Iran Must Face New Facts  
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12. (S) During his weekly security meeting with the Ambassador and General Petraeus, Prime Minister Maliki asserted that Iran needed to face "new facts on the ground" in Iraq and adjust its policies accordingly. He cited the success of Iraqi Security Force (ISF) and Coalition Force (CF) military operations against militias and criminals in Basrah and Sadr City. In both places, he said, the ISF has discovered increasing evidence of Iran's complicity in the training and equipping of criminal elements. He pointedly remarked that the Shia Arab street is "sick and tired" of Tehran's interference in Iraq's affairs. More broadly, Maliki highlighted the unprecedented political unity among Shia, Sunni, and Kurds as a positive force against this interference, noting the recent Executive Council's unanimous condemnation of political party militias. Maliki said he was

prepared to personally travel to Iran to discuss these new realities, but only after securing his objectives and concluding operations in Basrah and Sadr City. He encouraged the Ambassador to follow a parallel path with another round of trilateral talks with the Iranian government.

13. (S) The Ambassador responded that Iran must be held accountable for its malevolent militia structures which they continue to build for the purpose of controlling and interfering with the government of Iraq. Supreme Leader Khamenei had to make a choice, he said, to either pursue normal international relations with Iraq or continue his destructive intervention using Qods force surrogates--but he can't have it both ways.

#### Awakening in Sadr City?

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14. (S) Turning to Sadr City, the Ambassador again asked the Prime Minister about the possibility of developing an "awakening movement" there. Maliki expressed support, noting that National Security Advisor (NSA) Rubaie was now "in charge" of developing a viable program and had already opened a recruitment office for local volunteers. Maliki expressed belief the program would grow quickly once the Government broke the grip of Jaysh al-Mahdi Special Groups (JAM-SG) on the populace. Rubaie remarked that the Prime Minister may soon meet with Sadr City tribal leaders.

15. (S) General Petraeus expressed support for an "awakening" but cautioned Maliki to keep the military pressure on JAM-SG. He also urged Maliki to couple this with a "large dose" of humanitarian assistance. General Petraeus praised the recent Iraqi special operations missions as key to General Abud's

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deliberate approach to isolating Sadr City and taking down the JAM-SG leadership. (Comment: Maliki--who in previous months paid only cursory attention to military briefings--listened intently as General Petraeus described the tactics involved with probing the edges of the Sadr City battlespace. End Comment.)

#### Syrian Problems

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16. (S) Regarding Syria, General Petraeus informed the Prime Minister that the Abu Ghadiyah terrorist group--based in Syria--was responsible for the recent attack on Iraqi police checkpoints near al-Qaim which killed 13 policemen. Responding, Maliki lashed out strongly against the Syrian government, saying it knew every detail about these criminal elements along the border and likely supported many of their worst activities. Noting his 17 years of exile in Damascus, Maliki warned that "the Syrians would burn down the whole world if it gained them influence over their neighbors. They will never stop meddling in our business--it's in their blood." Maliki condemned the Syrian government's pursuit of Baathist slogans/agendas, vowing that they would not turn Iraq into another Lebanon. In a fit of pique, Maliki lamented that Saudi Arabia was starting to go down the same "meddling" path as Syria, though he did not elaborate further. (Comment: Recently, Maliki has been very frustrated by the reticence of his Arab neighbors--especially Saudi Arabia--to establish normal diplomatic relations with Iraq. End Comment.)

#### Return of Tawafaq to Government

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17. (S) Commending the current political unity following the military operations in Basrah, the Ambassador asked Maliki if he had finally reached agreement with Vice-President Hashimi on the return of the Tawafaq party to the government. Maliki responded affirmatively, but grumbled that Vice-President Hashimi and the head of the Iraqi People's Conference, Adnan al-Dulayumi, had provided him with two different lists of

candidates for the Council of Ministers, some of whom were still unacceptable. When the Ambassador observed that this did not appear to constitute an "agreement," Maliki demurred saying he expected Hashimi to provide a single, acceptable list shortly. Maliki also said he told Hashimi that ministers nominated by Tawafaq, or any other party, must have credibility and technical expertise to carry out their responsibilities--especially in essential services ministries--otherwise he would reject their candidacy.

Chalabi Unserviceable

18. (S) Continuing with the theme of essential services, the Ambassador asked Maliki about the status of Ahmed Chalabi, rumored to have departed as head of the Iraqi Services Committee. Maliki confirmed the rumor as true, grousing that Chalabi had accomplished nothing with his committee except develop a powerbase for the next election. Gaining velocity, Maliki claimed Chalabi hired a personal security detail filled with JAM militia members that were likely responsible for a bombing in Baghdad-Mansour, had provided automobiles to JAM Special Groups, and expanded his 250-person committee to over 900 personnel who were JAM. General Petraeus noted that Chalabi works directly with BG Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Qods Force. Given this situation, the Ambassador told Maliki the Embassy would withdraw its participation from this committee.

Breaking the Logjam on Foreign Military Sales (FMS)

19. (S) Returning to security issues, General Petraeus warned Maliki that MinDef delays in signing FMS agreements for equipment purchases would leave key Iraqi units without vital combat equipment upon completion of their training this summer. This included units being generated for the 12th and 14th Divisions, signal and engineer battalions, and command and control elements. General Petraeus noted similar problems with FMS agreements for the Iraqi command and control network and the purchase of C-130J transport aircraft. General Petraeus added that even if the agreements were signed immediately, it was already too late to avoid this shortfall. Maliki seemed surprised by this news and promised to raise the issue with MinDef Abdel Qadr at a meeting later in the

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day.  
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